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# Maine Fire Marshal News, July 2012

Maine Office of State Fire Marshal

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PREVENTION \* LAW ENFORCEMENT \* RESEARCH

# Maine Fire Marshal News

Maine State Fire Marshal's Office • Fire Research  
Maine Department of Public Safety

July 2012

Summer 2012 Vol. 3, Issue No. 2

## WELCOME!

Welcome to this issue of the *Maine Fire Marshal News*. Yes, we are publishing another edition late again! Why? We'll get to that later in this edition. Please take some time to read the newsletter and send us your own article for a future publication or comments in general. As always, we do appreciate the feedback on the newsletter many of you have sent over the years and look forward to hearing from you more in the future.

It is worth noting that this is the first newsletter published under Acting Fire Marshal Joe Thomas.



### A MESSAGE FROM ACTING FIRE MARSHAL JOSEPH E. THOMAS

It is my honor and privilege to be serving the great State of Maine and its' people as your Acting Fire Marshal. I must say that I will

miss working with and serving my friend and former boss, Fire Marshal John Dean.

The Fire Marshal's Office has a great staff and though our operations have expanded to include newer activities such as the regulation of retail fireworks sales operations, we will continue to work on achieving greater levels of efficiency to best serve Maine residents and the visiting public. Our staff remains committed to this.

Other than minor adjustments, the offices operational structure and philosophy will remain in tact throughout this transitional period. Our philosophy is one in which each unit within the organization (administrative, regulatory, law enforcement, research) works to assist and support the others. We will continue working toward our core mission to reduce the cost/burden of fire in Maine through a balanced use of law enforcement, regulatory and public education strategies and resources.

What is the best balance of these strategies and resources? The answer to that question depends upon what is happening in Maine in terms of fire, explosions, and the other policy venues we address. How do we know what is happening? We know what is happening because the greater Maine fire, police, medical, and data collection organizations either provide us directly with data or we access and download their data for our own analysis.

In short, we invest in and deploy resources based upon what the data is telling us might be the best way, or strategy, to diminish the frequency or severity of a given type of incident. We are a data driven organization that relies heavily on

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data we collect in addition to data others provide us with. The analysis of this data provides us with an ongoing picture of Maine's fire burden and the cost of that burden to Maine taxpayers, and that picture guides our resource use.

Needless to say, we owe considerable gratitude to Maine's Fire Service for taking the time to fill out and complete their NFIRS forms. Doing so will always be critical to us if we are to fulfill our core mission. We also appreciate the cooperation we've received from Maine's CDC, the medical community at large, other state organizations and data providers at large. We also appreciate the collaborative spirit many public and private sector organizations have shown us both past and present. The list of these organizations is too long to mention here.

Thank you all. I look forward to working with you in the coming years.

Sincerely,



Joseph E. Thomas  
Acting Fire Marshal



## **MAINE TOPICAL RESEARCH AND OTHER STUDIES UNDERWAY**

By Richard E. Taylor, Senior Research and Planning Analyst

As Acting Fire Marshal Thomas indicated, the office does conduct ongoing research. The research is of a summary often descriptive nature tracking four basic loss measures (fires, deaths, injuries, dollar loss) used to assess the fire burden. However, over longer

periods of time more comprehensive projects are undertaken. One of these included an analysis of fire deaths in Maine.

In 2005 the Fire Marshal's Office released the first comprehensive analysis on fire fatality. That report, *Fire Fatality in Maine: Part 1*, can be found on our web page in the research and reports section under fatalities. It was stated at that time that a follow-up study would be done. I'm happy to say that with the assistance of a University of Southern Maine criminal justice intern, Eric Madore, we've completed the construction of the data sheet necessary to provide a comprehensive analysis and report on fire deaths from 1993 through to 2002. Though we have not examined and set up the tables showing cause, proximity, fire protection, and other distributions, we can say that fire deaths did drop 36% from the previous decade (1983 – 1992).

Another study we'll be conducting will focus on fire safe cigarettes. This study and report is actually required by legislation passed in 2007 requiring that all cigarettes sold in Maine be Reduced Ignition Propensity cigarettes only. The report will examine any changes brought about as a result of the law and will focus on fire deaths due to smoking along with injuries, fires, as well as the consumption of cigarettes in Maine.

Other research will be conducted as needed to provide justification and support for any legislative proposals, policy changes or rule-making activities the office may pursue in the coming year or in responding to similar activities on the part of others. One area we'll be examining closely is chimney fires.

If you have not checked out the Fire Marshal's Office research and reports section of the web please feel free to do so. It is located at the url listed below. We encourage anyone in Maine who has also conducted fire research focused on Maine to forward it to us for posting on the site.

<http://www.maine.gov/dps/fmo/research/index.html>

## **NFPA FIRE PREVENTION WEEK**

### **THEME**

By Richard E. Taylor, Senior Research and Planning Analyst

The 2012 theme for the National Fire Protection Association's Fire Prevention Week is: **HAVE TWO WAYS OUT**. Fire Prevention week this year will be October 7 – 13. This is the 92<sup>nd</sup> annual Fire Prevention Week observed around the nation.

The concept of being prepared for and planning a safe exit from a fire is not a new theme for National Fire Prevention Week. We all remember "EDITH" "PRACTICE YOUR ESCAPE" and some of you may remember "FIRE DRILLS: THE GREAT ESCAPE" which ran for three consecutive years 1998 – 2000. This year's theme builds on the importance of escape but should lead many fire safety educators to recall those odd moments when they are asked the tough question: what if the way out is blocked?

It's a question we should all be prepared to answer even if you have to tell someone they may have to go out a second floor window in February. I've been asked that very question by older adults who are quite frail. The awkward moment itself demonstrates the need to address the question because if there truly are not two ways out, then you have a problem to solve. There is a solution and it's a window and you simply have to say it is the *only* way out.

Anyway, it's a great theme for a great week and the NFPA stands by with many brochures and other products you can use to make this your most successful Fire Prevention Week ever. For more information on Fire Prevention week and the products you can use go to the url below.

<http://www.nfpa.org/categoryList.asp?categoryID=1491&URL=Safety%20Information>



## **CONSUMER FIREWORKS**

### **REPORT**

By Richard E. Taylor, Senior Research and Planning Analyst

Inspector Tim Fuller and Plans Reviewers Jim Graves and Ron Peaslee hustled to license twelve retail consumer fireworks facilities in time for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday. The stores stretch from Presque Isle to Edgecomb and include nationally recognized vendor Phantom but also include local and regional veteran pyrotechnicians Steve Marson of PyroCity and Steve Pelkey of Atlas fireworks in New Hampshire.

There are licensed stores in the following towns:

- Manchester
- Winslow
- South Paris
- West Paris
- Monmouth
- Edgecomb
- Ellsworth
- Scarborough (2)
- Newport
- Presque Isle
- Old Town

Each store was different and required varying levels of scrutiny and a great deal of patience on the part of the Fire Marshal's staff. With the exception of Atlas and Phantom, the construction and display regulations were completely new to all and they sought our assistance throughout much of the process.

The Maine Medical Association, Maine Hospital Association, Maine's fire service and our own investigative staff will provide data on injuries and fires. It is important to remember that municipalities in Maine have considerable flexibility to regulate the use and sale of consumer fireworks. They are the primary regulators regarding use. Other law enforcement agencies will assist but logistically speaking, it will be difficult for state agencies to police such activity in a cost effective way.

## MEFIRS – Maine Fire Incident Reporting System

	Current Statistics 2012*	Final Statistics for 2011
Total Calls:	12,943	80,465
Fire Calls:	905	3,250**
Rescue Calls:	7,942	53,346
All others:	11,096	23,869
Fire Departments Reporting	na	202
Total Fire Dollar Loss	\$4,991,365	\$30,543,899
Civilian Fire Related Injuries	15	54
Fire Service Fire Related Injuries	8	27
Civilian Fire Related Deaths	7***	23***
Fire Service Fire Related Deaths	0***	0***

\* The Fire Marshal's Office will have all data for 2012 in by June-July of 2013.

\*\* Represents single incidents only.

\*\*\* Based on SFMO Investigations.

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**As you can see the final numbers for 2011 are in though some will continue to trickle into the database. We can now look back and compare 2010 to 2011.**

**Total call volume increased from 2010 to 2011 but the increases were in rescue calls only. Fire calls and all others actually decreased. The number of reporting fire departments increased to 202 up from 189 in 2010. This is really good news for all of us in these tight budget years when you'll need to justify increases or even hold budgets at the same level. Though total fire calls diminished by 5%, total fire dollar loss increased 11% from 27 million to 30. I'm hoping that when I review more closely the composite data for 2011 it will reveal that more departments are reporting dollar losses. This is really critical in making the case for fire protection, prevention, and suppression funding.**

**What looks most drastic is the change in civilian fire deaths. Because the 9 deaths recorded in 2010 were the fewest ever recorded since we started keeping track, the 23 in 2011 marked a 155% increase. To put it in better perspective though, the 2011 fire death count is 6 above the average, 17.5, we're seeing in a typical year now over the past ten years.**

**On the injury front, civilian injuries also increased 45% while fire service injuries decreased 13%. This hopefully is an indicator that the fire service is following appropriate protocols. We obviously have more public education work to do with civilians given the death and injury data.**

### *Notes*

**Please remember to code any fireworks related fire incidents accurately. If you need any assistance please contact me at 626-3873.**

**Please remember to check the validity of your data and make corrections as needed prior to submitting the data to us!**

**For information on MEFIRS contact us at 626-3872. Thank you.**

***"Fight Fire with Facts"***



standards established by the NFPA and OSHA (NFPA 1710 and/or NFPA 1720 and OSHA 1910.134).

The fiscal year 2012 SAFER application period is now open from July 16th through to August 10th. Go to the Assistance to Firefighters website for guidance and application materials.

## **SPRINKLER SAVE**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

The charming Irish pub below (Saco) escaped being completely demolished from fire due to the wise installation of a sprinkler system.



The pub, which opened 35 years ago, did sustain some water and smoke damage but among that which was saved were some very special personal items including family pictures, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century barn board walls, and other furnishings.

Both the owner and local fire chief acknowledged the sprinkler did its job. The chief claimed the sprinkler only discharged in the immediate area of the fire and hence, limited the extent of water damage. It is common myth that if you have a fire in a building *all the sprinklers go off*. As this fire demonstrated this is a myth born of many Hollywood movies in which small fires set off an entire system.

In addition, because the fire was held in check, the work of the local fire department was minimized. One of the great benefits of sprinkler systems is the time, and tax dollars, they can save by limiting response times and with that the level of risk to firefighters.

Would you let your child play with fire?

Every year thousands of Americans, mostly children, are hurt by consumer fireworks such as sparklers and firecrackers. Many are burned, scarred or disfigured by fireworks that are legal, but still very dangerous and cause fires. This year, an alliance of health and safety advocates asks you to keep fireworks from hurting your family. The risk is too great.

*Leave fireworks to the professionals.*

National Fire Protection Association along with American Academy of Family Physicians • American Academy of Ophthalmology • American Academy of Pediatrics • American Association for Hand Surgery • American Association of Public Health Physicians • American Burn Association • American College of Emergency Physicians • American Society of Plastic Surgeons • Emergency Nurses Association • Fire Department Safety Officers Association • International Association of Arson Investigators • International Association of Fire Chiefs • International Association of Fire Fighters • International Fire Marshals Association • Metropolitan Fire Chiefs • National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners • National Association of School Nurses • National Association of State Fire Marshals • National Volunteer Fire Council • Prevent Blindness America

## **SAFER GRANTS**

By Richard E. Taylor, Sr. Research and Planning Analyst

The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants (SAFER) was created to provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to help them increase the number of trained, "front line" firefighters available in their communities. The goal of SAFER is to enhance the local fire departments' abilities to comply with staffing, response, and operational

## **MAINE FIREWATCH**

By Richard E. Taylor, Senior Research and Planning Analyst

**Firefighters meander through (below) what is left of a beautiful colonial home in the Topsham area. By the time firefighters from eight departments arrived to battle the 3 alarm fire it was fully involved. Fortunately, two people along with their cat and dog all escaped safely.**



**Look at this fire below in Monmoth. Then look at it after. It's amazing the structure is standing. Chief Dan Roy of Monmoth and his crew deserve a lot of credit. What's more intriguing is that the two residents escaped**



Monmouth Fire



Monmouth Fire (after)

**only after they had to force their way through a front door that was, as they claimed was never used. This is a good lesson in maintaining adequate egress. The fire was started when an ember from the fireplace landed on a blanket being used to keep the cold air from entering the home under the front door.**



Brunswick Fire

**This home fire on Mere Point in Brunswick (above) provided for an interesting photograph. The fire was so hot it damaged the adjacent home. Dirt roads and other obstacles made it difficult for the fire department to fight the fire but it was contained to the one home. No one was hurt or injured as a result of this fire.**



A husband and wife were injured when their boat blew up during refueling at the Brunswick marina. The boat was experiencing some mechanical difficulties prior to the explosion though it is not certain that had anything to do with what happened. The 36 foot boat sunk completely before being pulled up for the investigation below.



Brunswick Marina



I-95

There were 24 – 30 grass fires (above) along Interstate 95 all caused by solder falling into a bin of a truck, then blowing out over a considerable expanse of highway. In all some 90 miles of I – 95 were involved in addition to portions of route 2. The bin containing the bits of wood had been cut short to fit under bridges.

The torch used produced the solder which ignited the wood. As the truck moved down the road it spread the fire.

An explosion at a salvage yard in Auburn (below) sent one man to a Boston area hospital with serious burns. Fire service and environmental personnel were called to the scene.



Monmouth Snowmobile Fire

Above is a great picture of Lewiston firefighters battling a blaze on Spring Street. Firefighters from Auburn provided assistance along with Mechanic Falls, Minot, Sabattus, Lisbon and Greene departments. The fire took place around the same time another fire was being fought in Auburn. One fire official stated it was rare to have a fire in both cities within the same span of time.

At present, seven individuals have lost their lives in Maine fires so far this year. Though no number of such events is a good number, we hope we'll see no more the remainder of this year. Maine is doing well in this regard and hopes to continue trending down in this gruesome statistical measure.



## This Month in Fire History

First mechanical water tower built New York (NY), 1879  
Semet-Solvay Co. TNT plant fire kills 50, Split Rock (NY), 1918  
Doxol Gas Co. fire kills 12 firefighters, Kingman (AZ), 1973  
Ringling Bros, Barnum & Bailey Circus tent fire kills 168, Hartford (CT), 1944  
Rolling Mill coal mine explosion kills 112, Johnstown (PA), 1902  
Civil War draft riot fires, loss worth \$21 million (2003 dollars), New York (NY), 1863  
Sonman coal mine explosion kills 63, Portage (PA), 1940  
Ionization detector patented, E. Meili & W. Jaeger, Berne, Switzerland, 1947  
Binghamton Clothing Company factory fire kills 35, Binghamton (NY), 1913  
Union Oil refinery fire kills 17 & loss worth \$177 million (2003 dollars), Romeoville (IL), 1984  
Little Sisters of the Poor home for aged fire kills 48, Pittsburgh (PA), 1931  
Americans with Disabilities Act passes, greatly affecting safety codes, 1990  
Oldest then-active fireboat, Grattan, destroyed by fire, Buffalo (NY), 1928  
Shamrock Oil & Gas Corp. refinery fire kills 19 firefighters, Sun Ray (TX), 1956  
Reagan Nursing Home fire kills 12, Puxico (MO), 1956  
Lake Forest Park Sanitarium fire kills 32, Seattle (WA), 1943

### *Portland, ME Fire, Jul 1866 - Terrible Conflagration*

PORTLAND, July 4.---A terrible fire is here, having destroyed Brown's sugar house, and is sweeping through the city before a strong southerly wind. 8 P. M.---The fire caught in the building above the sugar house on Commercial street, and has swept northerly through Fore street into the wooden buildings between Center and Cross streets, consuming everything as it goes. J. B. Brown & Sons from \$600,000 to \$700,000. Insured \$20,000. Staples & Son, machine shop and R. P. Richardson & Co.'s stove foundry are completely destroyed. One steam engine had come from Saco. Half the city is destroyed, and that half includes nearly all the business portion, except the heavy business houses on Commercial street.

## UPCOMING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Anti-Terrorism Training for First Responders October 10, 2012

Course provides technical operations and awareness training for firefighters, law enforcement, and other personnel who have a significant responsibility for providing a response to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) incidents involving explosives or incendiary materials.

**Training Location:** Office of State Fire Marshal  
45 Commerce Dr, Suite 1  
Augusta, ME 04330

**Contact:** Sgt Timothy York (207) 626-3870

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**PINE TREE BURN FOUNDATION**

**24<sup>th</sup> Annual Fire & Life Safety Conference**

October 12 & 13, 2012  
Saco Plaza Conference Center  
Saco, ME  
Unintentional Injury - Predictable and Preventable

Our speakers include NFPA's Judy Comoletti, Becky Miller from Northern New England Poison Control, Liz Weaver, So. Maine Agency on Aging, Karla Klass, RN, Univ. of Michigan Burn Center, Wendy Gordon of Child Safety Solutions, Suzanne Grace of Safe Kids Maine and others. We will also address Maine's new law regarding fireworks.



# Maine Fire Chiefs' Association

## October Meeting & Fall Annual Conference

**Sunday River Ski Resort, Newry, ME –  
October 24, 25 & 26, 2012**

**NETWORKING & EXHIBIT OPPORTUNITIES**

Please visit the MFCA website at:  
[www.maine-firechiefs.com](http://www.maine-firechiefs.com) Questions? Contact the  
Affiliate Office at: 1-800-452-8786

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Please Plan to Attend

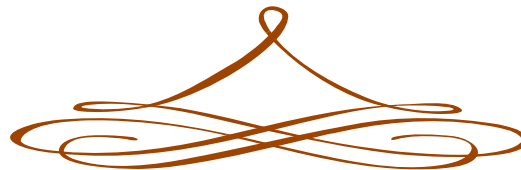
## THE BLUE MASS

**HONORING EMS, FIRE, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Sunday, September 9, 2012 10:00 AM  
The Basilica of Ss. Peter and Paul  
Lewiston, Maine

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*If you have an announcement or upcoming event you'd like to post in this newsletter please feel free to forward it to us using the contact information below. The next issue will be in October 2011.*



The *Maine Fire Marshal News* is an electronic publication of the Maine State Fire Marshal's Office.

Editors: Richard E. Taylor & Lori L. Gunn

To submit articles for publication contact the Fire Marshal's Office at (207) 626-3870 and ask to speak with the editors. You may also e-mail an article or comment to [Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov](mailto:Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov)

Articles submitted for publication in this newsletter from outside sources do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the State Fire Marshal's Office.

All articles are subject to an editorial staff review prior to inclusion. For a copy of submission requirements contact the editorial staff.

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